

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PLAB, FR
SUBJECT: UNIONS AND BARRE EXCHANGE WORDS

1. SUMMARY: MARCH 1 HUMANITE CARRIES LENGTHY AND OBVIOUSLY POLITICAL INTERVIEWS WITH LEADERS OF CGT, CFDT, AND FEN, CASTIGATING THE BARRE PLAN AND CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION. THESE ATTACKS FOLLOWED BY LENGTHY AFP INTERVIEW WITH PRIME MINISTER ON UNEMPLOYMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. FOR SOME WEEKS, COMMUNIST-LED CGT, THE SOCIALIST-ORIENTED CFDT, AND THE NON-PARTISAN BUT PS-ORIENTED TEACHERS FEDERATION (FEN) HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A UNIFIED AND INCREASINGLY MORE VOCAL PROTEST CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE BARRE PLAN, UNEMPLOYMENT, AND, MOST RECENTLY, THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL TO EFFECT A REDUCTION IN THE WORK FORCE IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY.

3. ON MARCH 1, COMMUNIST HUMANITE CARRIED LENGTHY INTERVIEWS WITH LEADERS SEGUY (CGT), MAIRE (CFDT), AND HENRY (FEN) WHICH HIT GOVERNMENT ON WAGE RESTRAINTS, INFLATION, AND UNEMPLOYMENT, AND WHICH
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CONCLUDED WITH APPEALS TO SUPPORT THE LEFT IN THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. HENRY'S STATEMENT, WHILE SEEKING SOME REFUGE BEHIND FIG-LEAF OF ALLEGED INSTITUTIONAL NONPARTISANSHIP, PROCLAIMS HIS UNION TO BE IN THE "SOCIALIST CAMP" AND A PARTICIPANT IN THE CLASS STRUGGLE; AND IDENTIFIES 85 PERCENT OF HIS MEMBERSHIP AS 1974 MITTERRAND SUPPORTERS.

4. IN AFP INTERVIEW SENT OUT ON TELETYPE WIRE EARLY SAME MORNING, PRIME MINISTER BARRE GAVE LENGTHY RECOUNTING OF HIS POSITION ON UNEMPLOYMENT, EXTENT OF WHICH HE FEELS IS BEING EXAGGERATED; THE NEED FOR INCREASED LABOR MOBILITY, BOTH GEOGRAPHIC AND OCCUPATIONAL; AND THE INADEQUACY OF THE REMEDIES WHICH THE LEFT HAS BEEN PROPOSING FOR DEALING WITH UNEMPLOYMENT, INCLUDING A LOWERED RETIREMENT AGE AND THE CREATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS. BARRE ALSO STRESSED THAT HE HAS NO HOSTILITY TOWARDS THE UNIONS, AND DESPITE THE "SYSTEMATIC AND VIRULENT" ATTACKS MADE ON HIM BY CERTAIN POLITICALLY MOTIVATED UNION LEADERS, HE REMAINS READY TO DISCUSS SITUATION WITH UNIONS AND WORK TOWARDS AN EQUITABLE SOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING PROBLEMS.

5. COMMENT: (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE) HUMANITE INTERVIEW, COUPLED WITH WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE, CONFIRMS THE PASSAGE OF THE FEN FROM POSITION OF TRADE UNION OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT TO AN ACTIVE ADVOCATE OF THE POLITICAL LEFT. GIVEN A FEN EXECUTIVE SYMPATHETIC TO THE PS, AND THE AMBITIOUS HENRY'S OBVIOUS DESIRE AND NEED TO AVOID GIVING HIS PCF MINORITY AS WELL AS ANY OTHER RIVALS ANY EXCUSE TO MAKE HIM OUT TO BE A GOVERNMENT DUPE OR WORSE, THIS CONFESSION OF SOCIALIST FAITH MAY HAVE BEEN INEVITABLE.

RUSH

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